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Transcript: Vice President Walter F. Mondale, 1 December 1977

Walter F. Mondale

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TRANSCRIPT

Vice President Walter F. Mondale

Thursday, December 1, 1977

MONDALE: Thank you very much, Governor, for that very, very kind introduction. I am honored to be introduced by one of the great progressive governors of our country, Governor Finch, to be with Lieutenant Governor Gandy, my old friend Sonny Montgomery and the Speaker of your State House and my old friend and colleague, Jim Eastland.

I am learning a lot about Mississippi today. The first thing I have learned is that there seems to be a lot more life in the House than in the Senate.

It is a special pleasure to be with an old colleague of yours who once served in this body, Jim Eastland. There are many strengths that this State has, but the influence and the power of your Congressional delegation has to be among the most important. Jim Eastland serves as the President of the Senate, serves as Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and his colleague John Stennis serves as Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and one of the most powerful members of the Appropriations Committee.

Now it would be easy for Jim Eastland and John Stennis to abuse that privilege unfairly, but they do not. In the sense of justice, they deal fairly by splitting the appropriations and the proceeds of the Federal Government 50-50. Fifty percent for Mississippi, and fifty percent for the rest of the country.

Jim Eastland is not only a powerful member of the Senate. I know he is one of the most loved public leaders in the State. And I found that out first-hand, and I want to report for the first time since it was not well covered . . . in 1970 when Eastland was running for re-election, he was afraid he might lose, and he was so desperate, he asked that I come down and campaign for him. And . . . '72, pardon me. I said, "How are we going to do this?" He said, "Well, let's just go to Jackson and just walk around the streets and shake hands." And I've never seen anything like this before in my life. It really impressed me, and it does to this day. The first person I met, I grabbed his hand, and I said, "Would you vote for Jim Eastland for U. S. Senate?" And the fellow's face lit up just beautifully. He said, "I sure will." He said, "We've got to get rid of the guy that's in there."

Well, I'm delighted to be speaking before the Mississippi State House in that body that remains closest to the people. Government doesn't mean anything unless it represents the interests, the needs, as perceived by the people themselves. Government is not established to direct and push people around. It's established to serve the people of this country and of your districts. There is no level of government that is more closely attuned at all times to the needs of the people than the State Legislature.

I spent some years as the Attorney General of my State, and I've been around legislators all my life, and I know that none of you have an unlisted phone number. The public has a right and expects and insists upon immediate access to you at any time that their concerns require attention. That's what

makes our legislatures of this country, of this state, so important to the health of our whole society.

The Governor has asked me today to speak to a State Conference on Economic Development. In the process of preparing my remarks, I became enormously impressed by the progress that this State is making with your help. Starting just a few decades ago with a State that had very little industrial underpinning, you have been one of the most rapidly developing, diversified industrial growth states in the Nation. You have become a major center of banking and finance. You have a diversified and strong family farm agriculture system. You have made enormous progress in human relations and education, health, and the whole range of programs needed to help people have a chance in a decent life. I don't think any State has made more rapid progress than yours. I noted that in the last ten years, per capita income in this State has increased by nearly 270%. That's average per capita income. I don't think any other State has done that.

And you've not only served your state well, but because of the progress that you have made in this area, you have served your country well. And none of that would be possible without a legislature that helped lead it in that direction. I served as I said as a state officer in my state. And I found out quickly several things about the legislature. First of all, be nice to them even if you don't want to. If you're not, they don't mind. You just won't have any heat or light for a year, that's all. The second thing is that the philosophy, the basic direction of the State is set by the legislature. Other officers can urge and suggest, but finally it is the legislature that decides what a State is going to be and where it is going and what is important and what isn't important. This progress in Mississippi would not have been possible without the work of those of you in this House and in the State Senate.

And I'm glad and honored to be here, and I am pleased to join the President of the United States to thank you for what you are doing for your state, but above all for the example that you are providing for our beloved nation.

Thank you.